

11, 2005. I would like the record to show that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes No. 363 and No. 364.

CONGRATULATING SGT. LEIGH ANN HESTER, FIRST WOMAN AWARDED THE SILVER STAR MEDAL SINCE WORLD WAR II

HON. JIM COOPER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 14, 2005

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate U.S. Army Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester, a recent recipient of the Silver Star Medal—the Army's third highest award for valor in combat.

On June 16 in Iraq, 23-year-old Sgt. Hester became the first female soldier to be awarded the prestigious Silver Star Medal in more than 60 years. At the awards ceremony at Camp Liberty, Sgt. Hester was recognized "for exceptionally valorous achievement" during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sgt. Hester serves in the 617th Military Police Company, a National Guard unit from Kentucky, and was working in my hometown of Nashville when she was called to duty. Sgt. Hester comes from a family dedicated to serving our country and fighting for freedom on foreign soil. Her grandfather won a Bronze Star in World War II. Her uncle served valiantly in Vietnam. When asked about her service in Iraq and her Silver Star, Sgt. Hester told one newspaper that she was simply "doing my job like any other soldier here."

On March 20th, while her unit was being ambushed by enemy fire and under counter attack, Sgt. Hester helped to thwart an insurgent assault against a convoy of 26 supply vehicles that were ambushed by about 50 insurgents, southeast of Baghdad. According to an Army account, "[Sgt.] Hester led her team through the 'kill zone' and into a flanking position, where she assaulted a trench line with grenades and M203 grenade-launcher rounds." Sgt. Hester killed at least three insurgents according to her award citation.

We honor Sgt. Hester now because the "job" she chose to do on March 20th was one so many Americans before her have also selflessly chosen: she put the lives of her fellow soldiers before her own. Her bravery distinguished her that day, just as her love of country and passion for freedom led her to join the National Guard in April of 2001.

Sgt. Hester has said she is looking forward to the day when her service in Iraq will be complete. She is looking forward to spend time with family and friends and her hopes for a new career. Sgt. Hester wants to continue to protect the lives of others when she comes home. She plans to pursue a career in law enforcement, a goal she has had since she was a child.

On behalf of the 5th District of Tennessee and the members of the House of Representatives, I thank Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester for her commitment to service—service to her country, her community and her fellow soldiers on the field of battle. I am honored to salute her today for her courage and her achievements. My thoughts and gratitude go out to her, her family and all of our men and women in combat who work to protect this Nation and bring peace to the world. And I look forward to the

day when I can join with her friends and family in welcoming her back home.

HONORING ELSIE MELOCHE

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 14, 2005

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Elsie Meloche, a resident of the 5th Congressional District of Florida, and a woman who has achieved a great deal in her long life. On July 19, 2005 Elsie Meloche will be 102.

Mrs. Meloche was born in Leipzig, Germany but immigrated to the United States through Ellis Island on February 16, 1909. She moved with her family to Massachusetts shortly thereafter, making their home in Holyoke. Mrs. Meloche married Wilford B. Meloche and in 1972, moved to St. Petersburg, Florida where she made her home until 2003 and then moved to Arbor Trail in Inverness, Florida.

During her lifetime, Mrs. Meloche worked many different jobs before retiring from Westover Air Force Base in Chicopee, Massachusetts. With her free time she currently enjoys dancing, bingo, and reading a good book.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in honoring Elsie Meloche today. I hope we all have the good fortune to live as long as she has and with as much enjoyment. She is truly a remarkable woman and someone with an appreciation for the importance of friends, family, and happiness.